(ii) A Task Force has been constituted to look into the irregularities in the implementation of the TPDS and Antyodaya Anna Yojana in the identified areas.

(iii) States/UTs have been asked to actively involve the Gram Panchayats in rural areas and local bodies in urban areas in the monitoring of Fair Price Shop as a measure of social audit.

(iv) A model Citizen's Charter has been issued to all the States/UTs for adoption.

(c) The Government has launched the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) in December, 2000 for one crore poorest of the poor families who do not have two square meals a day. Under the Scheme the foodgrains are provided at highly subsidized price of Rs. 2 per kg. for wheat and Rs. 3 per kg. for rice. The scale of issue which was initially 25 kg per family per month has been increased to 35 kg. per family per month with effect from 1st April, 2002. The AAY Scheme has been further expanded by adding another 50 lakh BPL families.

Purchase of wheat by private parties

244. MISS MABEL REBELLO: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is fact that Government are thinking of permitting the Private Sector to purchase wheat and other foodgrains from open market;

(b) if so, what percentage of foodgrains would be permitted to be purchased by the Private Sector;

(c) whether this measures is taken to bring down the huge subsidy bill of Rs. 27,000 crores per annum;

(d) if so, to what extent the food subsidy would be brought down; and

(e) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) to (e) As per present policy of the Govenment foodgrains trade is free in the country and there is no restriction on the private sector to engage

in procurement of foodgrains. All controls on licensing, stock limits and movement restrictions on foodgrains have been removed by the Government *vide* a Central Order issued on 15.2.2002. The public agencies during the last marketing season purchased only 21.67% of the total production of rice and 23% of the total production of wheat in the country.

Price of levy sugar

245. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY:
DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR:
SHRI RUMANDLA RAAMACHANDRAYYA:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether representations have been received for lowering the price of levy sugar sold from Public Distribution System outlets to the levels of the other foodgrains available under this scheme; and

(b) if so, the action taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) In view of the subsidy burden, the representation has not been accepted.

Sugar mills in Uttar Pradesh

246. PROF. M.M. AGARWAL: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that many sugar mills are lying closed in the State of Uttar Pradesh;

(b) if so, the details thereof, Mill-wise;

(c) the details of the action plan formulated by Government to revive the above mentioned sugar mills in the State; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) and (b) As per the information available in the Directorate of Sugar, the nine sugar mills remained closed during the last five sugar seasons. In addition twelve sugar mills remained closed for some sugar seasons as indicated from the enclosed statement (*See* below).